

Christianity and Society

- The Peril of False Hope

CLARENCE KILDE

- On the Meaning of Responsibility

EDWARD LEROY LONG, JR.

- Faith, History, and Self-Understanding

WILL HERBERG

- The Reformation Approach to Politics

DON MCKEE

- Editorials

- Book Reviews

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIETY

A Quarterly devoted to Christianity and Social Reconstruction

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New York 27, New York

Table of Contents

	PAGE
Editorials	3
The Peril of False Hope	7
by Clarence Kilde	
On the Meaning of Responsibility	10
by Edward LeRoy Long, Jr.	
Faith, History, and Self-Understanding	14
by Will Herberg	
The Reformation Approach to Politics	21
by Don McKee	
Book Reviews	27

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Errata

In the last issue of this journal we announced that the spring issue would carry a handbook on Christian Action. Actually the summer issue (to be published July-August) will carry this handbook. We apologize for the error.

Christianity and Society is published quarterly by Christian Action. Subscriptions: U. S., \$1.50 per year; 40¢ per copy. England, 6 shillings per year. Australia, 7 shillings and six pence per year. Subscriptions should be sent to Mrs. Nola Meade, Secretary, 3041 Broadway, New York 27, N. Y., or to Donald M. Mathers, Annandale, North End Road, London N.W. 11, United Kingdom.

CHRISTIANITY *and* SOCIETY

EDITORIALS

A Clear and Noble Decision

It is not often that one can say of a public event that it is in every way good. That is true of the decision of the Supreme Court in regard to segregation in the schools. Of course, it will create baffling problems for many communities; and in that sense one can see two sides to it. But the action of the Court was in itself clear and wise and noble. The fact that the Court was unanimous is an essential part of the act. The reasons given for the decision are a sound interpretation of the results of a long experiment in race relations, an experiment with the "separate but equal" approach to the problem. The Court's restraint in separating the announcement of its basic judgment from orders for enforcement was one of the signs of its wisdom. It is not impossible that its delay in handing down the decision until the school year was almost over was no accident. Apparently Chief Justice Warren deserves the highest praise for the Court's action. Perhaps one should not at this time spoil one's praise of the Court by comparing it with the other branches of our Federal government, but it is difficult to avoid doing that at this time. It is fortunate that the majority members of the Senate sub-committee on investigations, for the wrong reasons, suspended the Army-McCarthy hearings long enough to enable the public to take note of the Court's action.

The response of the country was one of the most encouraging aspects of this event. The Court spoke to a nation that was prepared for its decision to a surprising degree. The newspapers in the South, which have been quoted in the New York press, seem to be far ahead of the politicians. It is unfortunate that a leader of the caliber of Senator Russell should speak like a southern demagogue on this subject.

The Court's decision is a remarkable example of the wisdom that can come from a combination of respect for precedent with a willingness to learn from experience. The "separate but equal" formula was right in an earlier period. Not only did it represent a great advance toward justice; but, also, movement along the lines laid down by it was necessary if the present step was to be taken without disaster. If there had not been the development of equality in many respects in parts of the South, the integration of the schools would be too difficult to attempt at this stage. And yet this "separate but equal" formula was not viable in the long run for the reasons which the Court states so well. Even in the developing of those reasons the Court took the more obvious step first. Anyone who is not blinded by prejudice can see that an improvised graduate school is not equal to an established institution with a tradition and with what the Court calls "elements of greatness." To say that was to take a long step away from a purely external measuring of institutions, but it was an obvious step. To say that segregation as such represents a form of inequality is to say what many have known to be true for a long time, but now it can win such wide acceptance that it cannot be dismissed as the arbitrary extension of the law by judges.

Those who are most concerned about the enforcement of this decision of the Court, and not least the Negro leaders themselves, would do well to see how far the lines are drawn differently now in the South from what was the case even a decade ago. It would be a blunder of the first order to act in such a way as to make the old lines harder than ever when there is a chance to win new sections of Southern opinion to a faithful acceptance of the new situation.

The churches have an opportunity of overwhelming importance to help to mobilize moderate opinion on the local level and to encourage attitudes which are favorable not only to better public relations between the races, but also to good personal relations between the children in the schools.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has long taken the leadership in the struggle for justice on the legal level. Its recent meeting in Atlanta indicates that it is losing no time in the effort to prevent state-wide or local evasion of the law in the South. Doubtless, very strong pressure of this sort will be needed in some states; but it is to be hoped that this organization with its splendid record will adjust its strategy to the new situation. It may have allies which were unavailable before. Perhaps in some places it should step aside and let new and entirely indigenous movements act as the spearhead in this new phase of the struggle — movements which do not arouse the old hostile emotions which gather around its name. Above all it should be realized that legal action will not be enough, that the attitudes of parents and teachers and children can do great damage after many a legal victory. In the next period the momentous external gains of these last years must be appropriated by millions of minds and hearts.

J. C. B.

The Conflict with Communism in Indo-China

The battle in Indo-China may or may not be ended before these lines reach the reader. If the contest should be resolved at Geneva and not on the battlefield, it will mean only that the Soviets have succeeded in a partial wrecking of the European Defense Community as the price of peace in Indo-China. The French are very weary of the costly struggle; and yet they do not have the political grace to bring it to a successful conclusion by a genuine offer of independence to the Indo-Chinese. It should not have required eight years to realize that a battle between "colonialism" and communism in Asia is fought at a great disadvantage on

our side. We have been just as stupid as the French, because we thought that threats of "massive retaliation" would scare the enemy into submission. Instead it merely revealed that all military weapons, and particularly atomic ones, become ineffective when they are used from an inadequate moral and political base. The threat of atomic weapons cost us about as much moral prestige in Asia as the French reluctance to grant independence.

If the whole of Southeast Asia is delivered to the communist power, the Communists will have won another great victory, about the peril of which we remained remarkably complacent until it was upon us. A pathetic touch is given to all these dismal developments by the fact that the public is not too interested in them because it watches the war between McCarthy and the Army on television. In that war the Army is obviously at a disadvantage because it becomes more and more apparent that it appeased McCarthy for seven months before it finally and futilely tried to resist him. We are not a very imposing spectacle of a nation designed for "world leadership."

R. N.

Our Policy Toward India

One wonders sometimes if there is anyone in Washington who has influence on national policy who sees the problems of Asia from the point of view of the Asians themselves. There may be those who see things from the point of view of the leaders on Formosa and in South Korea and in the Philippines but that seems to be all. As for the whole of what we may call "uncommitted" Asia, we make and unmake policy in response to conditions elsewhere, often conditions in Washington. It is only now that there is much recognition of the fact that victory over communism in Indo-China depends as much on what the people in that country feel and think as it does on the amount of support that we can give to the military effort there.

The worst and most fateful example of blindness in dealing with Asia is in regard to India. In size and in moral influence, India is by far the most important part of

"uncommitted" Asia. If India should come under communist power during the next decade the loss would be terrible for the free world. And yet very few people seem to care about this. Most of our policymakers are more interested in the fact that Mr. Nehru says and does things which are offensive to them. Also, they may rely on the idea that we have the capacity for "massive retaliation" although they have learned that this is irrelevant to the situation in Indo-China. We should be doing everything possible to win the friendship of India. Except for the Administration's desire to continue economic aid, a desire which may be frustrated by Congress which is more interested in what Mr. Nehru has just said or done, we seem to be doing everything possible to alienate India. And this comes after the very great success of Chester Bowles in his mission to India.

The government of India and most of its national leaders are resolutely anti-communist. Not only is Mr. Nehru anti-communist, but also he has a deep and highly intelligent belief in democracy. He appears to us to be confused because his absolute rejection of communism for India and his fight against internal communism are combined with what seems to be softness toward Russia and China. Several factors enter into Nehru's outlook which make it understandable. He still has the idea that colonialism or Western imperialism is a greater menace to Asia than international communism. This is a holdover from the earlier experience of a man who spent many years in British prisons, and it does keep him from seeing things as they are now. He doubtless has in his mind a strain of Gandhian pacifism even though he is far from consistent about this. Most Indians who are influenced by Gandhi assume that opponents can always be persuaded to be reasonable, an attitude which makes them unrealistic about dealing with the communist nations. India is not equipped to defend herself against aggression and so it is natural for her to avoid antagonizing the communist countries. Some illusions about Communist China as the Asian country which has been most successful in defying the white world still

remain. Also there is the fact, often cited, that India is very young as an independent nation and naturally eager to avoid entanglements as our own country was in the early years and as many Americans are now.

In spite of all of these factors, it is still true that Nehru fights communism within India with very great determination and with strong democratic convictions. Moreover, Nehru is the great symbolic figure in India. His presence is crucial for the morale of India as a nation that is seeking to develop democratic institutions. He is the great enemy of the idea of a Hindu state as he is that of a communist state. If we want India to remain free, the most important thing to do is to strengthen Nehru's hand there. It is folly to be deterred from this by the fact that we do not always approve of his foreign policy. Nothing that he does in foreign policy is comparable in importance to his efforts to keep India from going communist from within.

J. C. B.

The Spread of Infection

In every society, even the healthiest, there are germs of disease even as there are in the bodies of the healthiest individuals. When the body is robust it eliminates these germs; but a debilitated body succumbs to them. Demagogues are the germs in the body politic. We probably vent too much hatred upon them considering their comparative harmlessness when the body is healthy. What is disturbing in the present instance are the signs of disease in the rest of the body.

Consider the Oppenheimer case as an instance. Dr. Oppenheimer is the real brain behind all our advances in nuclear physics, the one person more responsible than any other for our possession of these lethal weapons in our armory. Dr. Oppenheimer was an anti-Nazi in the thirties as were most decent men. In common with many of the rest of us, that brought him in contact with Communists. It must be admitted that the relations with communism of some members of his family were rather close; but not a breath of suspicion ever was breathed against his integrity. Dr. Oppenheimer did

oppose the development of the Hydrogen bomb. That opposition expressed the moral anguish which most of us felt about these weapons. His opposition was, though futile, very heartening. It revealed the perplexity of our whole age—that scientists, as men, may abhor what destiny is driving them to do as scientists.

But these two facts placed together, the association of his family with communism and his opposition to the hydrogen bomb, gave the demagogues a chance. The climate of fear which they had themselves created made their charges seem plausible. It was not surprising, considering McCarthy's unscrupulousness, that he should have threatened to give publicity to the charges which had been well known in Washington but which had been discounted because of the complete confidence which Dr. Oppenheimer enjoyed with all his associates and because the charges had been screened several times with "negative" results. To

circumvent McCarthy, the Administration "acted" by submitting the charges to a special loyalty board and by withdrawing all atomic secrets from his access. This latter measure was rather ironic in view of the fact that Oppenheimer carried more secrets in his head than any other man. The action seemed necessary in view of the suspicion which McCarthy had created in the public mind; but it could not do as much good as a few forthright words by the highest authorities would have done. In short, the incident was disturbing, not so much because it proved the wickedness of McCarthy but because it revealed that the infection had spread in the public and in Washington officialdom. No one in the Administration, for all of its piety, seems ever to have heard of the word of Scripture, "Resist the devil and he shall flee from thee." In consequence we are harried by a major ailment which might have remained the infection in the soul of a single man.

R. N.

WORK AND VOCATION

A CHRISTIAN DISCUSSION

Edited by John Oliver Nelson

Here is an important contribution to the problem of framing a Christian doctrine of work and vocation adequate to the contemporary scene brought up at the Amsterdam Assembly and due for further discussion at Evanston this summer.

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The Peril of False Hope

CLARENCE KILDE

In the complex amalgam, particularly on the international level, of ambiguities and contradictions which aggravate the persistent dilemma of force versus freedom, what is to be the Christian answer?

Now an integral part of our peril is that we desperately want and expect an answer and so think there is an answer. This is the peril inherent in the theme of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, "Christ, the Hope of the World." Purporting to hold out hope for the world which is desperately craving an answer, people are going to expect or entertain a false hope.

What will the average American be looking for when hope is promised at this Assembly at Evanston in August? He will be looking for a practical answer, a politically-expedient solution, a national policy that shall be potent, a program developed at Evanston which can be sold to the constituency back home, a procedure of political action that will resolve the tensions, make other people behave, and bring the enemy to his senses.

To expect these things from Evanston is to expect the wrong things; and, therefore, disillusionment is in the cards for many people, particularly Americans. For we are a wealthy, restless society of engineers, technicians, efficiency experts, who live in a land whose cities have never been bombed and whose borders have never been violated or invaded. We want not only answers but optimistic answers, and we want them now. We want too much too fast. And when, in consequence, we are thwarted, then we Americans get very confused and hysterical.

This is what happened to the United Nations. To be sure, American optimism is a good thing. It often gets things done which seem impossible. But when we expected too much too fast from the UN we became cynical and critical of the UN. The UN has not failed except in our own minds when we expected too much from it.

It is so also with the ecumenical movement and the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Many Americans are going to look hopefully in that direction for specific answers, and they will not find the kind of answers they are accustomed to look for in a scientific and technological age and culture. So much for the average American with a newspaper awareness of the impending Assembly of the World Council of Churches in August.

But one must furthermore consider the pathos of American Protestantism, which pathos lies in the fact that even church people will be beguiled by the theme "Christ, the Hope of the World." For the atmosphere within the major part of Protestantism is still activist; we are still influenced by three score years of the "social gospel" in which Jesus has been interpreted, in the words of one of its major proponents, Lyman Abbott, as having come as "the organizer of a new social order" (1896). For liberal Protestants this first half century, Jesus had something to say about temperance, conservation of natural resources, government control of utilities, legal recognition of trade unions, compulsory arbitration, tenement-house regulation.

This may seem like going afield of the theme, but it is simply a long way of saying that as energetic, optimistic, society-minded Protestants saw, in the pioneer age, the Christian answer contributing to the developing political democracy and, in the industrial age, devised the Christian answer for developing industrial democracy, so now we are going to expect a Christian answer to the problems of yet a new age—that of the developing international neighborhood.

The expectation of the Christian answer is most obviously reflected in the more sentimental sermons of the Protestant pulpit. Thus a friend of mine left the church in part because the minister was forever implying or outright saying that if American

Christians would only learn to love the Russians the East-West tensions would ease. Such a sentimental emphasis obscures the difference between motives and methods. So another declares the Christian attitude in international relations is to be primarily on the alert for any recrudescence of Fascism. This emphasis obscures the diabolical in Communism. Yet another, viewing the unimaginable destructive power of atomic and hydrogen bombs, makes the pulpit prophecy that perhaps now people will give more serious attention to the Church because "we must produce character faster than bombs or perish." This habitual American attitude of looking upon the Church as another character-building agency (which it is, but not only so) produces the peril of perennial expectation of premature answers even in problems of developing world community. One would think the mere sight and size of international controversies and conflicts would appear complex enough to discourage this expectation of an easy answer. But such is the power of habitual thinking, and such is the normal wish for a simple solution, that even on a world level American liberal Protestants and American rhetorical Fundamentalists alike proclaim, "Christ is the answer"—which is true only when divorced from our romantic and sentimental connotations.

Historical Christianity, rooted in biblical faith, has never offered an answer in our usual concept of answer but rather has borne witness. The abiding validity of classic Christianity lies in the fact that its adherents testify to the description of the nature of life rather than give specific answers to each problem. To give an answer is to give a solution to a problem, whereas to witness is to see and know—by personal presence and perception—the nature of the problem. The former may be only an audacious, aggressive assumption to objective analysis which is self-deluding; and the latter may well be a personal experience of the profundity of both the problem and the Gospel. Even where there is sincerity and sobriety in self-analysis there will be inevitable differences between an "answer" and a "witness."

Thus if we were all to bring the "answers" to our international tensions to Evanston from East Germany and America, Britain and India, Sweden and South Africa, France and Japan, the "answers" would obviously differ, and would be divisive. However, to bring not the answer for the immediate tensions, but to bring the proclamation of the hope inherent in the witness of the classic Christian Church, namely, the judgment of God and the mercy of God revealed in Christ—this is genuine hope indeed.

One cannot phrase this better than the expression of this conviction in the Ecumenical Studies leaflet No. 4: "In this situation Christians must testify to the judgments of God upon human idolatry and humanity, as well as to the mercy and forgiveness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ." It is in this biblical insight in which we become aware that in a moral world God's judgment falls on the exploitation of man whether that exploitation is done by colonialism or by communism. Here is ground for hope for both Americans and Asiatics because that hope has its basis in the biblical insight, namely, that Western imperialism and Russian imperialism are alike an offense to God.

To be repentant before that fact does not excuse anyone from the struggle for specific solutions in the East-West tensions, nor does it even excuse from sacrifice. But repentance before the God of judgment, knowing his mercy as revealed in Christ, may well purify motives and modify methods in our international relations. Thus does the witness to God's judgment and mercy as revealed in Christ also minister to the formulation of the answer. The valid hope of answers lies in the understanding that hopeful answers are found only on the other side of first having borne witness. In the words of this same Ecumenical Studies leaflet, "We know through faith that God's purpose in his world cannot fail, and we live in the hope that the hearts of men and nations may be transformed by the grace of his spirit. In the Christian view, history is an open process in which new beginnings are ever possible, if men will turn from the

service of false gods to the worship of the living God. Therefore, in a world of peril and hopelessness, the Christian message is one of courage and hope."

And Christ is the hope of the world in a further respect. The Gospel assures us that helpful answers lie only on the other side of first making the common witness of our faith to the equality of God's judgment and mercy, and so Christ saves us from premature solutions. But Christ is also our hope in that he saves us from the illusion of final and permanent victory in this world. Christianity did not choose as its symbol the palm branch, symbol of victory, but rather the cross, symbol of sin, suffering, and death. This is an honest symbol for it squares with reality, describes life as it is.

America, unbombed and building bigger and better barns to store more surpluses, has been losing sight of the cross as the symbolic description of life. Like the rich fool in that parable of Jesus we are impelled to say to ourselves, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry" (Luke 12:13-21).

The teaching of this parable is that when we are habitually victorious and successful we tend to forget the real nature of our life, "Fool, this night your soul is required of you." This rich fool epitomizes many Americans who, having a passion for the pleasant life of peace and prosperity, have exchanged the classic teaching of sin, suffering, and death, with its symbol of the cross, for the persuasion that one can always be victorious if one is only positive enough in his thinking. Exhibit A of this evidence is the boom in book sales of religious best-sellers purporting to give peace of mind in a half-dozen chapters, or to guarantee financial success through the practice of prayer, or to hold out the possibility of world peace through the mastery of the psychology of group dynamics.

Perhaps this persistent pursuit of prolonging the pleasant life of peace and prosperity, pressed also into service by the average American as the objective of foreign policy, explains in part the confusion and hysteria within us as a nation. We are in

the midst of learning a very hard lesson that we cannot expect to be victorious forever and ever at all council tables and on all military fronts. We only betray our adolescence as a nation by presuming to have our way everywhere in the world and at all times. But we have of late been learning in Asia that there can be no all-out military victory against 500 million and more Asiatics. If this is a moral world on the side of justice, which it is, then the peoples of Asiatic countries have as much moral right to revolution as Russia in 1917, the United States in 1776, France in 1789, and England in 1215. Given the fact of Asia's millions, together with the moral nature of the universe, it is an illusion to think we can have a complete and final victory by way of the obliteration bombing of mass retaliation. This is both impractical and immoral. And there is a certain justice in the fact that the Russians can retaliate with the same weapons we have. This must be recognized even though we may well feel the Russians have less justice on their side.

But this facet of the problem receives little recognition among us for again we betray our adolescence as a nation by oversimplifying the conflict in Asia as quite simply black and white (or yellow and white), right and wrong, our side and their side, capitalism and communism. And so we indulge ourselves in a premature solution because we thus oversimplify the conflict. Indeed, we have by no means exhausted the aspects of the conflict by simply reminding ourselves the conflict in Asia is inspired by rising nationalism throwing off the yoke of colonialism and imperialism. The problem has indeed such multiplicity of facets that the confusion in counsel as to what direction U.S. foreign policy should take in the case of Indo-China is quite understandable. It belongs to responsible government to make policy choices. In such an hour as this the witness of the Church must be the warning that in a moral universe there is no complete victory or permanent victory simply by virtue of possessing logistical know-how and power.

At this juncture it is well to see the essen-

(continued on page 30)

On the Meaning of Responsibility

EDWARD LEROY LONG, JR.

One of the key words in the current literature of Christian social ethics is the not-always-adequately defined term "responsibility." Indeed, the frequent use of the word may even spring from the lack of precise definition. Who does not like to think of his own program as a responsible one? Social liberals are fond of doing so and take the term "responsible" as a kind of byword for a realistic and creative social policy. But social conservatives also regard their outlook as responsible because it seeks to preserve the values in the existing social order. The word "responsible" twice appeared in a recent issue of *Christian Economics*!

When a word is thus bandied around for partisan appeal it ceases to have much meaning. It also robs a word of the capacity to denote a particular quality in any social position which is pliable and sensitive rather than doctrinaire. Such a quality on both sides of a partisan disagreement makes possible a democratic pluralism and exchange of ideas that is more self-correcting than is a struggle between two ideological partisanships both claiming to be altogether "responsible."

As justifiable as it may seem to us of a more liberal persuasion to apply the term "responsible" to our particular social policy, there is a certain sense in which such use of the term is very dangerous. It contributes to an ideological struggle which eclipses true give-and-take between social views, and it may also breed a sophisticated type of self-righteousness concerning one's own objective (*i.e.* *We have the responsible outlook, sic!*). This tendency to equate the term "responsible" with the social policies of the A.D.A. or its equivalents is understandable enough when one considers many of the alternatives—be they the antics of the vigilantes or the illusions of the new-styled Adam Smiths. Even so, if the term is captured for simply partisan use by any single

faction, then the significance of the term for the type of society in which creative interplay between various social forces is constructively possible will tend to be eclipsed.

By "responsible" we must always mean, in addition to advocating a morally legitimate social policy, the possession of those qualities of tolerance and mutual respect for differing political persuasions that makes possible the functioning of a democratic society. Those whose zeal is to be "realistic" in their analysis of political problems are quick to emphasize the role of power in the formation of social policy and the consequent necessity for manipulating power for the attainment of proper ends. This frame of mind is a needed protest against the do-nothingness of some idealists. It is not, however, a balanced outlook unless along with its emphasis upon the role of power it restates and reaffirms the means by which, through constitutional and representative government, power struggles are sublimated into creative political decisions. If politics is simply the art of "who gets what and when" then politics is not different in barbaric tribes or totalitarian regimes from politics in a democracy. It is easy to become so obsessed with the role of power as to overlook the need for those principles which distinguish the sublimated character of power struggle in a democracy from the cruder counterparts in other types of political organization. It is the difference between these two levels of activity that not only characterizes freedom but furnishes an essential element in the responsible society.

A society will not be truly responsible if it lacks various shades of political persuasion and a means to find creative balance among them. The phenomenon of McCarthyism includes an effort to destroy this balance through the liquidation of political opponents by smear and innuendo. This is perhaps its most sinister characteristic and the thing that makes it, politically speaking,

more totalitarian than democratic in its orientation. But it is likewise possible to fall victim to a McCarthyism-of-the-left wherein, by techniques of scorn and ridicule, one denies the legitimate right of others who are more conservative than oneself to hold their convictions and to seek to gain approval of their policies. The responsible society must keep free of all efforts to prevent the holding of differing opinions by manipulative or bludgeoning techniques. We shall be greatly helped in preserving the open give-and-take of democratic freedom if we do not use the term "responsibility" as a *Kampfbegriff* for the political left (or, perish the thought, the political right).

We desperately need to reassert this quality of freedom. A democratic society is not free to tolerate that which threatens to destroy its freedom, but beyond such conspiracy it ought to be able to tolerate every type of heresy and argue it down if it be wrong. What is unfortunate in the present time is that we so well understand (as indeed we should) the way in which the Communists would destroy freedom, but do not equally well understand, popularly speaking, the same threat when it appears in ultra-right wing garb. To this end let us emphasize responsibility, not as a term denoting the partisan aims of a particular social outlook, but as that special quality of national life within which social outlooks may meet and be tested in open discussion. To this end we must learn to entertain constructive criticism of our own programs as well as to make constructive criticism of those who differ from us. We must resist like the plague sloganizing and name-calling. In a period of our national life when dissent produces malice and just criticism is frequently met with slander, surely we cannot over-emphasize the importance of this basic and supra-partisan connotation of responsibility.

Freedom and responsibility are frequently discussed as though somehow counterpoised. In an age that chatters much about freedom, a few prophetic voices urge us to acknowledge our responsibilities. These voices are wise and earnest, but their suggestions

must not lead us to suppose a dichotomy between freedom and responsibility. Responsible policy is most likely to be worked out where there is freedom to discuss this policy from all points of view. In ethical theory it is commonly said that responsibility is an aspect of moral freedom. This insight should help us to avoid a separation between the two concepts. Freedom permits discussion of social policy between men of differing convictions and thus helps to maintain that policy sound. If the capacity of men to exchange ideas and convictions openly and with respect for each other's integrity is lost to our society then society as we cherish it also will be lost.

The political fabric of our national life is today honeycombed by an inordinate amount of slogan thinking. Slogan thinking precludes the kind of give-and-take between contending views that marks healthy democratic procedure, and it also does much to destroy completely the conditions of a responsible society. Doctrinaire and ideological thinking makes men unable intelligently to concern themselves with the immediate and tangible realities which they confront. It is because such slogan thinking is so widespread that we would sound a warning against making the term "responsibility" into another slogan.

Those of us of a liberal persuasion must always guard against writing off conservatives as "irresponsible" *per se*. That some conservatives are utterly irresponsible as judged by the criteria of this discussion goes without saying; but this does not justify any wholesale application of the category to everybody who didn't, for example, vote for Stevenson. I can well remember how I was chastised by some "liberal" friends somewhat in the fashion of a traitor when I said, not that I was supporting Eisenhower in the last election, but that I could see how an honest Christian might possibly be led to do so.

It is necessary to respect the integrity of the conservative individual who argues, for example, that social security funds should be administered as a contractual trust rather than as a general tax. It is necessary to acknowledge the integrity of the man who

urges a limit on spending so long as he openly states his reasons and weighs the alternatives. It is imperative to appreciate the contribution of the individual who honestly fears the injustices that can follow governmental manipulation of the economic process providing such an individual acknowledges the dangers and excesses of unchecked boom and bust. Perhaps it is a thin line that separates the responsible conservative from the ideologists—but it is a line which when it is not acknowledged and respected casts one's own thinking into the realm of ideology.

It is not easy to make the necessary allowances by which ideological self-interest may be transcended—but it is possible in some measure. We may not free ourselves of ideological bias, but we can always acknowledge our imprisonment—and this is partial freedom. It is easy to overwork the negatively valuable apologetic that “we all have our bias.” We must never let this argument substitute for a witness to the faith we hold. For if all conviction is but ideology then responsibility is a mirage and the strong man gets the spoils. The chief value in understanding ideology is to break down the false claim and unjustified pretensions that divide us in order that we may have fellowship and conversation between men of mutual goodwill but differing social analyses.

Grace at this point comes through candor. It is the result of intellectual and moral openness. Responsibility is impossible without candor. Lack of candor is the besetting sin of most power politics and the potential source of their undoing. Responsibility involves the cultivation of candor even more than it means getting into politics because politics wields power. Responsibility is even more than getting into politics on the “right” side of an issue, though this is important. It involves getting into politics with full conviction of position but also with full allowance for illusion and with complete respect for the right of others with differing convictions to do the same.

There is a tendency among those whose political analysis is “realistic” (because they emphasize the element of power-struggle in

political activity) to understress ethical and moral elements. Indeed we are frequently warned that the falsely moralistic approach may well spell ruin, as when people vote for politicians simply because they love their dogs or don't drink liquor in their houses. This warning is valid and still needs to be sounded, but let it not be so understood as to exclude the importance of moral stature and basic integrity in assessing political candidates. A candidate does not have to be involved in machine corruption or petty personal vice to be realistic about power issues! In our contemporary (and legitimate!) concern with the ambiguous character of moral choice and the attempt to understand the ways in which moralistic forms of self-righteousness betray men into false political alternatives, let us not de-emphasize the obvious moral conditions of responsibility.

These moral elements will always stand restatement. They include the basic virtues of honesty, sincerity, loyalty, and dependability. While these qualities may of themselves not issue in responsible policy there can be little responsibility without them. For example, sincerity is of itself not a sufficient mark of responsibility; even anarchists can be sincere. But lack of sincerity is bound to be a mark of irresponsibility. Those who say one thing and do another, those who oppose a given social policy for hidden and selfish reasons they will not admit, those whose political loyalties are not acknowledged—all are judged irresponsible by the lack of their sincerity. A similar analysis holds concerning the other virtues.

But we all know that deeper insights are necessary if we are to understand the meaning of responsibility. Immorality is a certain measure of irresponsibility, but morality does not necessarily bring responsibility. Mature responsibility begins at the point where the individual moral consciousness acknowledges its interrelatedness with other moral consciousnesses. This indeed is one of the etymological derivations of the term. Responsibility involves a “response” to something outside itself.

Privately hoarded virtue, however perfect, is not virtuous but perverted and selfish

attainment. Acknowledgment of moral interrelatedness stands over and against every type of haughty individualism that enjoys private goodness without a sense of duty toward neighbors. Surely the norm of Christian love is crucially relevant at this point. Private achievement of virtue, especially when compounded by pride and arrogant disregard for others, is not virtuous at all!

This has implications for all aspects of the human enterprise. It would quickly judge a rugged individualist who gained wealth and paid no taxes, gave no alms, and acknowledged no sense of obligation to the social conditions which had made possible his wealth. It would judge a "go-it-alone" foreign policy which for selfish or self-righteous reasons determined its actions only by consulting itself and neglecting its allies and its neighbors. Or, in a different context, this meaning of responsibility would little comfort the philosopher whose jargon is deliberately esoteric or the theologian whose dialectical abstractions are understood only by the select.

Actually, moral interrelatedness is not brought about as much by the development of responsibility in ourselves as by the growth into responsibility which is laid upon us by others. Theologically, we may say that it involves grace. Our selfishness is limited when we give in to the legitimate needs, wishes, and desires of other men. Resistance to these claims (and who does not have within himself many forms of such resistance?) is a measure both of sin and of irresponsibility. The family man gains responsibility by becoming part of an intimate group. He must accept obligations not laid upon the bachelor; he is also helped in the acceptance of these obligations by the grace of the family which crowns his duties with joys and satisfactions.

The acknowledgment of moral interrelatedness involves not only sensitive recognition of the interests of others but also a concern for the fabric of the social order. All would agree that one of the basic elements in Christian responsibility is this concern for the actualities of the social structure. This indeed is one of the great emphases in contemporary thinking and is

true to the heart of biblical faith and to a theology of the Incarnation. At this point Christianity sets itself clearly against all spiritualistic and other-worldly efforts to escape from history either by direct intent or by the default of an irrelevant idealism.

But this concern for social realities is not, logically speaking, a partisan affair since the concern may well express itself in differing strategies. It becomes partisan only in existential decisions (as, e.g. between a neo-isolationist and a cooperative foreign policy). It is, in fact, one of the measures of the cancer at the heart of our political life that many actual political contests today do confront us with the choice between a relative responsibility and an utter irresponsibility. This utter irresponsibility is largely measured by failure to be concerned about obligations to others and to less privileged groups. In a healthier situation the choice between political factions in a nation would be a choice between alternative implementations of a commonly acknowledged responsibility.

In the pressure of actual political activity for partisan objectives (and nothing in this article is meant to discount the legitimacy of such partisanship!), it is easy to eclipse the supra-partisan factors which go into a definition of any responsible social activity. We shall do well if we make it our task, in a cultural situation prone to secondary absolutisms and blinded partisanships, to re-emphasize the basic and non-partisan elements in responsibility. We should even rejoice when the conservative political alternative to any given question is responsibly held and advocated by men who respect the valid working of the democratic process, rather than, as is so often the tragic case, being held irresponsibly and ideologically.

It is also well for us to remember the limited adequacy of any program and the fact that none of us is altogether responsible. The web of circumstance is such that at best any program will but ameliorate some partial aspect of an unhealthy situation. The amelioration is crucially important and toward it we must indeed work.

(continued on page 20)

Faith, History, and Self-Understanding

WILL HERBERG

I

The problem of history is not merely an academic problem of historiographical interpretation; the problem of history is ultimately a problem of human existence and self-understanding. When he attempts to define the meaning of history, man is really attempting to define the meaning of his own life. Human life is not simply lived *in* history, in the context of time; it is lived *as* history, as a temporal process in and through which the "nature and destiny" of the individual emerges in its full significance. In other words, history is the stuff of life, and any inquiry into the meaning of life becomes, at some stage, an inquiry into the meaning of that ongoing process of life, individual and collective, which we call history. This general truth became a personal truth for me many years ago when I was confronted with the profoundly existential problem of reorienting my entire life in terms of some new center of ultimate concern and meaning—in other words, when I was confronted with a life-shattering crisis of faith. The old faith by which I had lived had collapsed, and some new grounding of existence had to be found if life was to be possible at all. It was then that I discovered that coming to terms with life meant coming to terms with the problem of history, and that there were in fact three basic outlooks, or "philosophies" of life and history (if the term "philosophy" can be used for something that is so often below the level of awareness), in terms of which man attempts to understand himself, to establish his being, and to relate himself to ultimate reality. What I want to do in this paper is to outline these three approaches, as I understand them now, and see what implications they have for the problem of faith and self-understanding. The three outlooks to which I refer may be called the heathen, the Greek-Oriental, and the biblical-Hebraic.

II

Let us look first at the *heathen* view of things. The central category in the heathen view is *nature*: nature is the context in which man strives to understand himself and establish meaning for his existence. Nature, to the heathen mind, is divine, the locus of all ultimate sanctities; it is also cyclical, or rather engrossed in cyclical rhythms: consider the eternal recurrence of the seasons, of the positions of the sun, moon, and other heavenly bodies, of almost all the visible phenomena of nature, in fact. This nature is the heathen's primary context of meaning. In other words, heathen man strives to achieve meaning for existence and to realize his humanness by engulfing himself in nature and its cyclical rhythms as an organic part of it. Heathen man feels "wrong" and uncomfortable to the degree that he stands out from nature as an incommensurable element; well-being, blessedness, significance he establishes by establishing his oneness with nature, and that he does, or strives to do, through so-called "nature" rites, sympathetic magic, and other cultic forms. Neither the self nor history is permitted to emerge. The paganism contemporary with the ancient Hebrews, G. Ernest Wright tells us, "having analyzed the problem of life over against nature, had little sense of or concern with the significance of history. Nature, with its changing seasons, was cyclical, and human life, constantly integrating itself with nature by means of cultic activity and sympathetic magic, moved with nature in a cyclical manner" (*The Old Testament Against Its Environment*, p. 71). Heathenism is thus at bottom total immanence, a primal unity of the divine, nature, and man. To strive to be one with the divine by being one with nature: that is heathenism.

There would be little point in these reflections under the present circumstances

were it not for the fact that the heathenism I have thus briefly described is not something confined to primitive peoples remote in time or place. On the contrary, heathenism as I have described it seems to enter into the spirituality of men at all times and places, including our own; it is something perennial. We need not look far to find its contemporary manifestations. I refer not so much to the worship of the "dark forces" of "blood and soil" or sex, with which contemporary "paganism" is preoccupied; I have in mind something much more common. The man who tells you that he finds God preeminently in the sunset or the Grand Canyon or the burgeoning vegetation, and that he feels most truly himself when he is most truly one with the divine thus manifested, is giving expression to authentic heathenism. This kind of nature-panthéism is fairly widespread today among people who fancy themselves "religious" but consider it narrow and confining to be tied down to church or Bible or tradition. The open air is their church, the "book of nature" their Bible, the spontaneous promptings of the "aesthetic sense" their tradition. For their inspiration, they often go back to Wordsworth and the imitation Wordsworthians; in any case, the heathen motif of nature-worship is never far below the surface.

Side by side with this sentimental, romantic version is another contemporary form of heathenism far more influential. It is the hardboiled form of scientific naturalism. Scientific naturalism conceives of man as merely a biological organism reacting to natural environmental stimuli. Man possesses no dimension of being that carries him beyond nature, because there is no such dimension. Nature is once more ultimate, hence divine; and man is properly man when he is fully integrated with, or adjusted to, the nature of which he is nothing but a part. Scientific naturalism is thus, in the strictest sense of the term, heathen nature-worship. It is curious, indeed, to reflect how thoroughly and primitively heathen is much of the thinking that prides itself on being so ultra-modern.

If nature is the central operative category of heathenism, the central operative category of what I call the Greek-Oriental view is *timeless eternity*. ("Eternity" is such an ambiguous term, and may mean so many different things, that it seems best to qualify it with the adjective "timeless" to avoid confusion.) To the Greek-Oriental mind—and here I speak primarily of Greek philosophy and the higher Oriental spirituality, for the actual outlook of the mass of ancient Greeks was thoroughly heathen, as has been the outlook of the mass of Orientals through the ages—to the Greek-Oriental mind, I say, nature is still in a sense divine and engrossed in cyclical rhythms: does not Plato say that "all things are full of gods" (Laws x.899), and does not Aristotle find that time can be satisfactorily pictured only as a circle? In a way, therefore, the Greek-Oriental view is continuous with the heathen; you might say it takes over the heathen view of nature. But here there is a parting of the ways, for whereas heathenism takes nature as really ultimate and as ultimately real, to the Greek-Oriental mind, nature is not ultimately real at all; it is nothing but the external vesture of reality. Behind this curtain, or veil, of nature is to be found the "really real." The "really real" is one, immutable, timeless, eternal, noumenal (to be apprehended through the mind or spirit), whereas nature is obviously many, changeable, temporal, empirical and phenomenal (to be apprehended through the senses). Nature is thus not "really real;" it is at best only partly real, at worst mere illusion. History, which is assimilated to nature in its cyclical rhythms and externality, shares this degradation: what indeed can be more multiple, mutable, temporal, and phenomenal than history? Oriental thought therefore dismisses history as trivial; and while the Greeks produced histories of a high order, they could not achieve either a concept or a philosophy of history. Reality was the timeless eternal, which history could not share.

With this view of reality, the Greek-Oriental formula for self-understanding and self-realization is almost obvious: not self-engulfment in nature, as in heathenism,

but self-extrication from nature and history and self-elevation to the timeless realm of spirit. There are, indeed, various ways in which, it is felt, this may be achieved: mystical, philosophical, even cultic ways. But whatever the way, the basic conviction is the same: what is "really real" in man is something immutable and eternal in him which is identical with what is "really real" in the universe ("Atman is Brahman"), and man is really himself to the degree that he can escape from the unreal flux of nature and history and abide in the eternal. This is attainable in this life, we are told, through philosophy, through mystic discipline, or through both combined in various ways, but it is attainable only tentatively and sporadically; genuine release and self-fulfillment in the eternal comes only with death, which is the sloughing off of nature and history—with individual death, in the Western version, or with the end of the long cycle of rebirths, in the Eastern. The self, which hardly appears in heathenism, does indeed emerge in Greek-Oriental spirituality—only to be dissolved again as illusory, non-essential, time-bound, and empirical into the super-personal reality. If heathenism is to strive to be one with the divine by being one with nature, Greek-Oriental spirituality may be roughly defined as striving to reach the divine through some timeless structure of ideas or ideals.

So defined, it becomes obvious that the Greek-Oriental "eternalistic" approach permeates much of contemporary spirituality, far more thoroughly than the people affected are themselves aware. When the conventional "spiritually minded" Christian or Jew asserts that man is "really" a divine soul imprisoned in a mortal body waiting for liberation through death, what is he propounding but a Platonic body-soul dualism in its crassest form, something utterly unknown to the Bible? When Bertrand Russell, that modern-minded man *par excellence*, assures us that "to realize, both in thought and feeling, the unimportance of time is the gate of wisdom" (*Mysticism and Logic*, pp. 21-22), what are his words but an echo of an atemporal devaluation of the world and history that Greek idealist or

Hindu metaphysician could well understand and applaud? When the emancipated, high-minded man of today tells us that of course the actual world is all confusion and chaos, and will always remain so, but that he finds the locus of meaning for life in the realm of "eternal values," to which he strives to remain loyal, what is he propounding but a neo-stoic idealism recalling the melancholy wisdom of pagan philosophy in the last days of the Roman Empire? What I have called the Greek-Oriental view is thus obviously not something confined to Greek philosophers of other times or to Oriental mystics and metaphysicians in remote places; it is a very pervasive, in some cases, perhaps even dominant, ingredient in the thinking and feeling, in the philosophy, spirituality, and religion of our time.

I have gone into all this, as I indicated somewhat earlier, not primarily for academic reasons, but because what I have here called the heathen and the Greek-Oriental views have entered in important ways into my own intellectual and spiritual biography, so that I can testify from personal experience to the part they have played in one man's search for meaning in life. When the Marxist faith, which had formed the context of my thinking and the ground of my existence from early youth, collapsed some twenty years ago, I became open in a radical way to what Judaism and Christianity had to tell me about the ultimate truth of life. What came to me under this head proved most disconcerting and discouraging. A good deal of it was sheer heathenism, in the sense in which I have defined it: a sentimental nature-worship in which I was expected to "enthuse" in the "glories of the universe" and in this way presumably find God. Religion, I was told, was really a kind of "natural piety," a sort of "comprehensive reverence for all reality." This to me seemed unintelligible, even slightly repugnant, and I made short shrift of it, for which I am eternally thankful. The more refined and sophisticated idealism in the Greek-Oriental tradition proved much more difficult to come to terms with. There was so much that was noble, true, and beautiful in it: it was obviously the

religion of the highminded man, and it was presented to me as the "essence" of Judaism and Christianity. My reaction was ambivalent: I was attracted and repelled; in the end, repelled, because however highminded I recognized this kind of spirituality to be, I could not stomach its dualism of body and soul, its devaluation of history and the empirical world, its reduction of all human endeavor to futility and of all human action merely to a stoic endurance for the sake of the ideal but without meaning as far as action itself was concerned. It was not until I discovered that the Jewish-Christian tradition was something very different that I became at all receptive to it. It was not until I discovered that the biblical faith of the Jewish-Christian tradition could make sense of the historical and the empirical, and therefore of human life and action, and indeed could do so in a way more creative and illuminating than the rival secular philosophies, that it began to take on significance for me. I mention this because now that I look back two decades, I am sure that this misunderstanding of Judaism and Christianity—a misunderstanding promoted by so much said and written in their name—was for some time a serious obstacle to my reorientation and "return." And from my recent experiences on the campuses of this country, I can testify that some such thing still operates to confuse and immobilize many of the best young people who are searching for meaning in life and a way of reestablishing a vital connection with their religious tradition. Only to the degree that this misunderstanding is removed will the way be opened for presenting biblical faith in its full authenticity and power.

III

I have so far described two ways of looking at God, man, and the universe—the heathen and the Greek-Oriental. The two share, to a degree, a common view of nature, although from that point they diverge quite considerably. The third view I want to deal with may properly be called biblical-Hebraic, although in certain aspects it has so passed into our Western thinking that we find it hard really to appreciate its

unique origins. If heathenism takes nature to be the context of meaning and self-realization for man, while Greek-Oriental spirituality takes timeless eternity, biblical-Hebraic thinking sees man and his existence primarily in the context of *history*.

In the biblical-Hebraic view, nature is (for the first time) "void of divinity"—"disenchanted," as Max Weber would put it. Nature is no longer the locus of any sanctity: it is real, of course, being the creation of God, but it is not ultimate or self-subsistent, not divine in any sense; it operates under an "imposed law" (Whitehead), and is subjected to man to know and to use.

The keeping of Yahweh's covenant [writes Henri Frankfort, in his account of Hebraic spirituality (*Kingship and the Gods*, pp. 243-44)] meant . . . sacrificing the greatest good ancient Near Eastern religion could bestow—the harmonious integration of man's life with the life of nature. . . . That boon was available only for those who believed that the divine was immanent in nature, and the Hebrew religion rejected precisely that doctrine. The absolute transcendence of God is the foundation of Hebrew religious thought. . . . Every alleviation of the stern belief in God's transcendence was corruption. In Hebrew religion—and in Hebrew religion alone—the ancient bond between man and nature was destroyed. . . . Man remained outside of nature, exploiting it for a livelihood, offering its first-fruits as a sacrifice to Yahweh, using its imagery for the expression of his moods, but never sharing its mysterious life, never an actor in the perennial cosmic pageant. . . . To Hebrew thought, nature appeared void of divinity, and it was worse than futile to seek a harmony with created life when only obedience to the will of the Creator could bring peace and salvation.

Because man, in the biblical-Hebraic view, transcends nature, though as a crea-

ture he is of course conditioned by it, he can have a history. For the first time, the concept of history as distinct from nature emerges, since for the first time human events are seen to be radically different from natural events, man's time radically different from nature's time. Man's time, or history, is creative, laden with novelty, unique with its burden of significance (*kairos*). It is all this because like man, whose projection it is, it is a mixture of nature and spirit, of determinism and freedom; it is therefore the realm of transcendence and creativity. In heathenism, man's time is assimilated to nature's time, and both are seen as engrossed in cyclical rhythms. In Greek-Oriental spirituality, man's time is again assimilated to nature's and again seen as inescapably cyclical, but here it is devaluated in the scale of reality. Not so in biblical-Hebraic thinking. "To the Hindu," writes William Robinson, "the historical is the illusory; for the Greek, it is the incidental; for the Hebrew, it is that which is real" (*Whither Theology*, p. 76).

Affirming the reality of history is at the same time affirming the reality and integrity of the human personality, for history is but human personality in action. Everywhere the devaluation of the one entails the devaluation of the other, and the vindication of the one, the vindication of the other. Kierkegaard pointed to this profound truth when he asserted that "man's essential dignity consists in the fact that he can have a history" (*Either/Or*, Vol. ii, p. 209).

Affirming the reality of history means also saving it from the endless cycles of "eternal recurrence" which void it of all content and significance. In biblical-Hebraic thought, time is not a circle, as it is to the heathen and Greek-Oriental mind; it is, despite all its chaos and confusion, a *directed arrow*—a movement heading somewhere, getting some place, destined for some "end" as both *finis* and *telos*. Thus everything becomes future-oriented, open to novelty and creativity and fulfilment. "Modern historical consciousness," Karl Löwith reminds us, "originates with Hebraic and Christian thinking, that is, with the eschatological

outlook of a future fulfilment" (*Meaning in History*, p. 196).

But even this does not go far enough in indicating what is really implied in the biblical-Hebraic category of history. Something much more is involved. If the question is asked what is the "real reality" in man, what is it the actualization of which constitutes the fulness of his being, the heathen (turned philosopher) would say nature; the Greek metaphysician and the Oriental mystic would say that which is "timeless and eternal" in him; but the biblical-Hebraic thinker would say *his history*. History is the very stuff out of which human being is made: human existence is implicit history; history is explicit existence. Let me indicate what this really means. When you encounter someone in a close personal relation whom you really want to know, do you ask for an abstract conceptual "definition" of that person, as a Greek-minded philosopher run mad might do? Of course not; what you would be concerned with and ask for is *the story of that person's life*. And rightly so, because you know that the full truth about a human being, about a unique human being, can be communicated only through a personal history. Take another example. Suppose you were in some remote part of the earth and announced yourself an American, and someone asked you quite innocently, "What is it to be an American?," what would you do, try to contrive an abstract conceptual definition of "Americanness"? You might, but you wouldn't get very far. After futile efforts in one direction or another, would you not finally, in desperation perhaps, burst out: "Look, you want to know what it means to be an American? Well, here is what happened . . .", and then proceed to tell him the *story of America* from Columbus' day to ours, and conclude, "Here you can see what it means to be an American." "Being an American," like "being John Smith," can best be defined and communicated in terms of a history, a story, a recital. "The human person and man's society," Reinhold Niebuhr tells us, "are by nature historical. . . . The ultimate truth about life must be mediated historically" ("Religion and Edu-

cation," *Religious Education*, Nov.-Dec. 1953). It is the biblical-Hebraic conviction that man can best understand himself, in his relation to God and the world, in terms of his history, because it is his history that is the texture, or fabric, of his being. For the same reason, the biblical-Hebraic view insists that man can realize himself only in and through his life in history. It is in and through history that God calls to man, and it is in and through history, human action in history, that man responds. The heathen pursues his life in nature below the level of history; Greek-Oriental man seeks to escape from history into timeless eternity; biblical man—and Western man is biblical insofar as he has absorbed the biblical view of history—strives to redeem history, though realizing that it is not in his time or by his power that the work can be completed.

Once we come to understand our existence in terms of history, we see immediately that each of us has many partial histories, reflecting the various concerns and interests of life. Each real concern of life defines, and is defined by, its special history. Thus, I am a Columbia man, a man associated with the labor movement, a member of the Herberg family, a New Yorker, an American, a Jew. Each of these concerns, allegiances, or associations has its own special history in and through which it is made explicit. But most of these histories, we ourselves realize, are merely partial histories; they illumine only a fragment of our being and do not tell us who we "really" are. Beyond these partial histories there must be some more basic history, in some way more fundamental and comprehensive, some really "total" or ultimate history, in the sense of a history defining what it is we ultimately are. Such a history, that history which one affirms in a "total" and ultimate manner, is one's *redemptive history* (*Heilsgeschichte*), for it is that history in terms of which the ultimate meaning of life is established. It is the history that defines, and is defined by, one's faith; faith is, indeed, the acceptance of a redemptive history as one's own background history, one's own biography. "To be a self," H. Richard Niebuhr has said,

"is to have a god; to have a god is to have a history" (*The Meaning of Revelation*, p. 80). If we reverse this—"To have a history is to have a god; to have a god is to be a self"—we get a glimpse of the full significance of the relation of faith and history.

Whatever history I take to tell me who I "really" am defines my actual faith. If I take my American history to define not merely my "Americanness," but also the fulness and ultimacy of my being as a person, I make "Americanism" my faith and "America" my god; and the same applies if I take the history of the labor movement and use it for a similar purpose. To take a partial history, defining a partial and relative value or entity, and endow it with total pretensions: that is idolatry. Idolatrous faiths (not all idolatrous faiths, but those that emerge among history-conscious people) are faiths defined by, and defining, partial histories made total. And just as faith in the living God of the Bible, the "God beyond the gods," is the only alternative to idolatrous faiths, so the definition of life in terms of the "sacred history" of God's dealings with men as given in biblical tradition is the only alternative to the idolatrous "totalization" of one or another of the partial histories of which our existence is made up. "In Israel," says Martin Buber, "all religion is history" (*Hasidism in Religion*, *Hasidism*, p. 199), and the Christian biblical scholar, G. Ernest Wright, subtitles one of his illuminating studies "Biblical Theology as Recital." Jew and Christian share the same redemptive history, though each sees it from a different interpretive-revelatory center.

IV

Let me conclude on a personal note again. When I was a Marxist, I accepted without much thinking the prevalent caricature of the Jewish-Christian tradition as passive, anti-historical, "other-worldly" in the worst sense. Afterward, when I was really open to what the tradition had to say, I was nonplused when I found so many of its spokesmen confirming this caricature, though in rather different terms, or else frantically trying to adjust themselves to the latest

fashion in secular thought, which for me and others like me was already thoroughly discredited. It was only when I came to see the structure of biblical faith in its authenticity that I saw how gross the caricature really was, and yet how much there was in conventional Jewish and Christian thinking to justify it. But I now saw something more. I saw the really fatal flaw in Marxism. I saw that Marxism, even in its pre-Communist and non-Communist forms, was at bottom a system of false redemption built on an idolatrous redemptive history. I saw that Marxism was essentially a secularization of Jewish-Christian redemptive history, in which God is replaced by the Dialectic, the "chosen people" by the proletariat, the "faithful remnant" and even the Messiah by the Party; while the "beginning" and the "end" of history, the "original rightness" lost and the "restored rightness" to come, are robbed of their transcendence and made points *within* history. This process of secularization, I now came to understand, was a process by which Jewish-Christian redemptive history was idolatrized, and therefore demonized, a process by which history was turned into redeemer and eschatology was converted into utopia. Of the disastrous consequences of self-absolu-

tizing utopianism run mad I did not need to be convinced.

When I began really to comprehend the biblical understanding of history, I came to see that here was the larger framework which I had been seeking, a framework in which human existence, and indeed the entire human enterprise, could be endowed with meaning and history made to take on the seriousness that it seemed to me any profound view of life required. The full dimensions of human existence and history, so badly truncated in Marxism, were restored, and so was the full sense of human responsibility in the face of the divine call and under divine providence. In short, I came to see that the biblical understanding of history, with its *trans-worldly* eschatology, was the only real alternative to a delusive this-worldly utopianism, on the one hand, and a life-renouncing other-worldly spiritualism, on the other—the only alternative, in more modern terms, to a fatuous optimism of self-redeeming history and the total pessimism of despair. It is to this conviction that I want to bear witness today.

(This paper was presented at the Institute for Religious and Social Studies in New York in the series, "The Meaning of History," on February 2, 1954.—EDITOR.)

(continued from page 13)

We must, however, be guarded from fanatical self-righteousness by acknowledging that our sense of responsibility is only partially expressible. If we thus acknowledge our limitations we may be partisans, but we shall not be haughty partisans, and we will be enabled to be the more charitable in our judgments of those who differ from us. In so far as our opponents acknowledge the rudiments of responsibility we may converse with them and exchange ideas even across differences.

For Christians, the process of determining specific duties in a given situation is not just a pragmatism but a process of keeping ultimate principles in judgment over con-

crete actions. If in defining responsibility as concern for social circumstances we have emphasized the pragmatic over the falsely moralistic let us balance the discussion here by recalling the true dimensions of prophetic moral judgment over the pragmatic conditions of political possibility. This too is involved in responsibility—a prophetic temper that renews the people's vision of God's ultimate demands which transcend all political implementations of those demands. This vision saves us from being too certain too soon about our particular decisions and preserves us in that continual attempt to develop a responsible society which is marked not by static achievements but by creative yearning always more adequately to do the will of God.

The Reformation Approach to Politics

DON MCKEE

An ancient fable entitled, "The Blind Men and the Elephant" says:

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

The Second feeling of the tusk,
Cried, "Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The Third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The Fourth reached out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he;
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"

The Fifth who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"

The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

This fable may have been written for children. But the questions it suggests about life and its implications for politics are profound and far-reaching. It would be difficult, in fact, to find a story from folklore which illumines the competing approaches to politics today more thoroughly than this one.

The fundamental question this narrative raises, of course, is whether blindness is man's fate and whether he can ever know the truth, complete and absolute, which the elephant exemplifies. This is a decisive question and the answer men give to it determines, perhaps more than any other factor, their politics and social strategies.

I

The answer of the cynics is that all human beings are like the "six men of Indostan." They are blind, and blindness to the truth is forever their fate. This is the human situation, the cynics say, because reason and morality are totally unable to prevail over self-interest. Each person, as a result, views the world distortedly from the limited perspective of his own narrow selfishness and therefore cannot see truth and ideal values.

Consequently, man cannot know what "the elephant" is really like! Our observation is always limited and brings us only partial and perverted "opinions." We apprehend only what our interest-blinded gropings permit. Even in observing and experiencing the same reality, we perceive only the false and conflicting world of "a rope," "a spear," "a snake," or "a wall"—but never the whole truth about the elephant. That all men, as the last line of

the poem states, are "in the wrong" about the nature of life and reality is thus cynicism's central emphasis and ominous conclusion.

In fact, so complete is this blindness, the cynics say, that man does not even know that the elephant exists. There is thus for cynicism "no such animal" as absolute truth!

Social conflict, of course, is the inevitable result of such presuppositions; for since there is no way of overcoming the limited outlook and human blindness which self-interest brings, life consists only in a constant clash of opposing claims. "Loud and long" are the disputes—with each party to the conflict "exceeding stiff and strong."

Anarchy, the cynics conclude, is man's natural state. Because his self-interest always dims the visions of reason, man is incapable of governing himself! Democracy, consequently, is impossible! The only solution to the conflict of sightless men, as the cynic Thomas Hobbes said, is to give one man, even though blind, such total power that he will be able to subdue the constant anarchy resulting from the clash of opposing interests. The necessity for power is thus cynicism's principal political message.

Such a solution, however, only replaces anarchy with tyranny, as Hobbes logically admitted; for the sovereign, who is granted total power, is of course blind too and therefore incapable of wielding power except in his own interest. It will be to his interest to employ his authority to establish order based upon his will; but such harmony may be achieved only through destroying the freedom of other men to follow their individual desires and interests.

Thus either anarchy or tyranny is the only possible political consequence from the cynical view of human nature. This cynicism accepts. The permanent and total blindness of men makes it impossible to accept anything else in history.

Cynicism's demand for dictatorship as the price for overcoming anarchy is, of course, a monstrous danger to humanity. This the fascist and Nazi movements, horrible approximations of the cynical approach to politics, amply demonstrated. But there is

one element in political cynicism which makes it less dangerous than some of its totalitarian rivals. This is its lack of moral appeal. Cynicism's denial that man can comprehend anything of value beyond his own self-interest, its specific disavowal of the possibility of knowing the truth, and its insistence that the only political alternatives for mankind are the evils of anarchy or tyranny—these assertions do not make political cynicism as attractive to men who are searching for something to believe in and to devote their lives to as political theories which pretend to be simple avenues to the true and ideal society. At the same time, if the pessimism of cynicism is rigorously followed (as it never completely is because men seem to demand an appeal to at least some ideal values with which to justify their actions), the lack of ideal values in the theory logically deprives the blind men, who exercise power, of any recourse to identifying their authority in an absolute way with goodness and truth—the pretension which always intensifies the tyranny with which absolute power is exercised.

II

The idealists, however, see the matter differently. Most of them are convinced that such an objective reality as "the whole elephant" does exist and that humanity can find out about it fairly simply. Man, they say, is basically not blind. If blindness is his present state, it is merely temporary and may be overcome without great subtlety because essentially reason and morality are capable of dominating self-interest. The extension of reason and moral principles into all aspects of life will therefore open men's eyes so that they will discern the true way to live with one another.

Thus, eventually, the "men of Indostan" who are now blind will regain their vision and really know what the elephant is like! As their blindness is eliminated by the capacity of reason and morality to overcome self-interest, each Indostanian will no longer view the world dimly from his partial and limited perspective and advance different and conflicting views about the nature of life. When all men see the true elephant,

there will be only agreement among them; and, consequently, they will no longer dispute "loud and long" with one another. The new undimmed vision of the world will therefore totally terminate the strife which now arises from the conflicting insights the blindness of men brings, and common comprehension of the truth will establish harmony and freedom throughout the land! It will therefore no longer be necessary to superimpose superior power upon men in order to achieve peace and liberty. Power, in fact, will ultimately be unnecessary—and, in fact, dangerous to the natural harmonies wrought by the simple extension of reason and morality. Even the State will finally disappear. Thus, ultimately, the idealists are always utopianists.

But while utopianism in the last analysis is the characteristic of all idealists, provisionally they divide into two basic political approaches. The first group are simple sentimentalists; the second are more hard-boiled and dangerous.

The essential strategy of the sentimentalists is to persuade the blind men of Indostan to kindly start seeing straight. This they patiently explain may be easily accomplished if all Indostanians will only permit reason and goodness to prevail over self-interest, so that partial claims are subordinated to the common good. This, when accomplished, will end the conflict between men and obviate the necessity for imposing arbitrary power upon them in order to achieve social harmony.

This stress upon the ability of blind men to see led historically to an insistence upon man's capacities to govern himself. While blind men have to be led by others, those who have vision are capable of guiding their own destinies! Thus the optimistic rationalism of the Renaissance—with its disavowal of human blindness and its stress upon mankind's rational and moral capacities—led to a demand for democracy and self-government. Even today, most justifications of democracy are based upon this approach.

But while idealism did lead historically to a systematic dismantling of absolute power in many realms of life, its tenets have been severely shaken by the fact that the

blindness of men has persisted. Education, upon which democracy is supposed to rest under this interpretation, has not eliminated the self-interest upon which partial and biased political insights rest; rather, it has often provided these interests with a weapon with which their partial claims may be more efficiently advanced against the similar claims of others. The efforts of such sentimental idealism to persuade the big and little Hitlers of this world to substitute vision for blindness has not diminished the sightless fury with which such blind men have attacked those who challenged their interests and opposed their oppressive imperialisms. Even majorities have failed to meet the optimistic demands of idealistic democratic theory and have often missed altogether even the broad outlines of what the elephant is really like!

Of course, the sentimental effort of trying to persuade blind men to see may bring some increase in altruism and insight. But in the massive group conflicts of politics, this strategy has usually turned out to be irrelevant to the crucial task constantly facing mankind—that of preventing men in their selfish blindness from destroying one another. It has often removed public attention from the constant need for checking with countervailing power the might blind men exercise and has usually diverted the efforts of men into extraneous fields of endeavor. This has been its chief harm. But because the sentimental idealists have seldom possessed dominant power, they have usually not been guilty themselves of directly oppressing the rest of humanity.

III

This, however, cannot be said about the hardboiled idealists, who are far more dangerous. The basis for their strategy consists of thinking that some men's capacity for subordinating interest to reason has progressed to such an extent that a moral elite comes into being which is no longer blind like other men.

Applied to the fable about the blind men and the elephant, this approach amounts to taking the observation of one of the Indostanians and insisting that his opinion about

the elephant is the one and only correct one. All Indostanians are thus considered temporarily blind — except one! This one is somehow supposed to have overcome his blindness and therefore what he sees when he approaches the elephant is the complete truth! Consequently, this approach insists upon arming the one “emancipated” Indostanian with supreme power in order to impose his superior wisdom upon the other sightless and biased people.

The tragedy of this approach is that the one Indostanian who is theoretically exempt from blindness is, in reality, blind just as the others! He still thinks a side or a leg is the essence of the whole elephant! The partial observation of one blind man is consequently identified in an absolute way with the whole truth about the elephant. His limited view is so totally equated with the complete truth that all opposing opinions about the elephant from the other five men are by definition completely false. The blind man with the “superior insight” is thus given moral justification for destroying all who differ with his “true” view.

This is essentially why modern communism is so terrible. For in Marxist theory what makes men blind are vested economic interests which come from the ownership of the means of production. The proletariat, however, having no such property, is consequently supposed to be uncorrupted and its vision of the path to freedom is not considered to be blinded like that of other men. Only the proletariat, therefore, in Marxist theory may wield absolute power without danger to liberty! In the theory of Lenin and Stalin, of course, the proletariat too is blind, because of its natural tendency to form trade unions and thereby bolster up the capitalistic-democratic regime. It is, therefore, held that only the converted communist leadership is exempt from the blindness with which all other men are afflicted! Thus men who in reality are limited and self-centered, like all the men of Indostan, are provided moral justification for wielding the absolute and unchecked power which always leads to tyranny.

What makes this second idolatrous brand of idealism so dangerous, of course, is that

it provides a moral appeal for absolute power. In this approach the men of Indostan are told that if only the one Indostanian who has supposedly overcome his blindness is permitted to exercise total power temporarily, the result will be the total elimination of all falseness from life. Such an appeal is morally attractive to people who do not admit that the one Indostanian, supposedly exempt from blindness, is sightless and biased as are the others. This moral appeal for absolute power is thus actually more dangerous than the cynical approach which lacks such ethical attractiveness.

Communism of course is not the only theory which is guilty of this grievous and idolatrous error. Any theory which considers one blind man's view of the truth to be the entire truth falls into the same dangerous category. This, of course, is the worst aspect of McCarthyism today. For the essence of this sad malady is to claim that one blind and power-hungry person's arbitrary definition of loyalty is the only way to express devotion to American principles and to insist upon total conformity to it; so that a person who opposes both communist totalitarianism and the undemocratic methods of this Congressional demagogue too is branded immediately to be disloyal and suspect. This is just as absurd as an effort to insist that there be no deviation from the sixth blind man's definition of the elephant as constituting merely a rope!

IV

The third approach to politics is basically a combination of elements from both cynicism and idealism.

It borrows partially from cynicism, in that it accepts the fact that in the collective aspects of human existence it is difficult for organizations and groups totally to eliminate self-interest. Thus the clash of self-interest requires the exercise of some political authority so that order may be achieved, and power is therefore always held to be necessary. But at the same time, such power is always dangerous too and must be checked because it is wielded by men motivated by at least some degree of self-concern.

Yet in accepting the general blindness of groups, this approach holds with the idealists that absolute truth (the whole elephant) does exist and that some blind men are capable of coming closer to perceiving its essence than others. It insists, therefore, as cynicism does not, that there are different levels of blindness. In dealing with the elephant, for instance, the insight of the two Indostanians who thought the beast was "like a spear" and "like a snake," was far more important than those who found him to be "like a fan" and "like a rope"; for to survive against such an animal, knowledge of the creature's tusks and trunk certainly was far more relevant than recognition of the presence of the more or less harmless ears and tail.

Because of this capacity of men to rise in some even limited degree above selfish interest and see some part of the truth, all life is not completely characterized by the clash of interests; and the power necessary for order consequently need never be totalitarian and pervade all aspects of life.

Unlike cynicism's complete pessimism, therefore, this third strategy advocates moral support for those Indostanians whose observations, while blinded by a residual self-interest, are closer to the truth than the others. At the same time, however, it borrows partially from cynicism in insisting that even the best political observations of men fall short of the full truth and can never be completely identified with it. In the words of the fable:

Though each was partly in the right,
... All were in the wrong!

This strategy thus calls for provisional ethical endorsement of political positions approximating the truth more fully than competing alternatives—but at the same time emphasizes the limited and partial nature of the positions it provisionally endorses. This theory that even the best observations of men cannot be equated with the whole truth, because all men are partially blinded by their self-interest, is necessary to prevent the tyranny which inevitably follows from giving universal and absolute justification to views which are narrow and partial.

This third strategy is of course a political approach based upon the insights of the Reformation and from St. Augustine before it.

Of particular significance to politics is the realistic theoretical defense of democracy which springs from this Reformation philosophy. For under this approach, in order to secure the fullest possible truth about the elephant, it is necessary to consult at least a majority of the blind men. To base power, therefore, upon a majority of the "six men of Indostan" reveals a great deal more about the elephant than the observations of only one or two of the blind men.

At the same time, however, this Reformation defense for democracy does not claim, as Rousseau suggested, that this majority has the complete truth. It merely insists that basing governmental decisions upon a majority of the partial interests and limited insights of men will usually result in a policy closer to truth and justice than arming merely one interest group with total power.

Democracy, therefore, insists that the insights and interests of the minority should also be heard; for the blind man who is in the minority—even if he adds only the insight that the elephant has a tail—will contribute information to the political whole which the majority of the men of Indostan have overlooked.

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REVIEWS

McCarthy

McCarthy and His Enemies—The Record and Its Meaning, by William F. Buckley, Jr. and L. Brent Bozell; Henry Regnery Co., Chicago; 1954; 412 pp. \$5.00.

The author of *God and Man at Yale* has collaborated with a recent graduate of the Yale Law School, L. Brent Bozell, in a highly documented defense of Joseph McCarthy, his objectives and some of his methods. The authors do not attempt to defend McCarthy's claim in February of 1950 to have "the names of 57 card-carrying members of the Communist Party" in the State Department. They point out that McCarthy was a novice in Washington politics at that time and hence made some exaggerated and ill-conceived statements. They contend that McCarthy unwisely left himself open for the Tydings Committee, which was appointed to examine the validity of his charges, to spend its time investigating McCarthy rather than the charges he made against the State Department. They ask the question, "Is the view of McCarthy cultivated by the Liberal intelligentsia something for which McCarthy himself is responsible, or something for which persons other than McCarthy are responsible?" (p. 63).

Their conclusion is generally that "McCarthy's record is . . . not only much better than his critics allege, but given his métier, extremely good" (p. 277). However, they grant that several untenable assumptions underlie his thinking *at times*: e.g. "One cannot at one and the same time vigorously oppose Communism and McCarthy" (p. 299). These false assumptions, they say, seriously undermine McCarthy's effectiveness. "For one thing, in calling Drew Pearson and the *Milwaukee Journal* pro-Communist, he [McCarthy] loses the opportunity to make the far more telling indictment of them that their performance invites; that whatever their intentions, they do act in a way that advances the fortunes of Communism" (p. 301).

This is the line of argument which runs throughout the book. Its importance lies

in the fact that it is written by two "bright young men" and that it is an "earnest" of what is to come in the phenomenon which is called McCarthyism. With this in mind we will list some of the features of this attack on McCarthy's critics.

1. The doctrine of political purity.

The authors excuse McCarthy's distortions and falsifications of fact as part of the "groin-and-eyeball" school of politics. They complain about "the severity with which his verbal excesses are judged, as against the indulgence shown to other public figures [Florida's George Smathers or John L. Lewis] whose language is, if anything, more distorted and more abrasive" (p. 305). They fail to note the differences between accusations of communist treason and political invective.

On the other hand, the "mistakes" of General George Marshall or of liberals who do not go along with a "reign of terror" against American Communists are either evidences of disloyalty or naive stupidity. One must be pure in his anti-communism. Potentially, this means any policy followed by a responsible official may be later interpreted as "acting in a way that advances the fortunes of communism."

2. The Devil's tail.

In February 1950, McCarthy charged there were "57 card-carrying Communists" in the State Department. The authors note that the Party had recalled all membership cards several years before and that "many Communists are not identifiable on the basis of their overt political activities" (p. 53). The most dangerous Communists are, of course, those who, like the Devil, do not let their tails show. What kind of evidence do we have then? (1) Their activities in the past. (2) Their resistance to a hard security policy. It makes little difference to the authors whether they are actually Communists or not; yet the authors try to make the case that McCarthy's conformism is limited to eliminating Communists. Buckley and Bozell are obviously prepared to go much further;

"Some day the patience of America may at last be exhausted and we will strike out against Liberals" (p. 333). We presume this includes those conservatives who do not belong to the "groin-and-eyeball" school.

3. A hard and wholesale security program.

Buckley and Bozell suggest that loyalty and security dismissals should be lumped together with those for other causes. It would allow a "harder" program because individuals would be protected from public knowledge of the reason for dismissal. This would relieve us of the necessity for loyalty boards, formal hearings, and legal procedures of any form. What an ideal solution!

Having made the point that "protecting the national interest" is prior to individual rights, they say, "A second serious deficiency of the traditional loyalty-security program is its insistence upon quasi-judicial procedures" (p. 248). The legal protection of accused persons is more or less irrelevant. "An employee's case should be 'heard,' not because he stands to gain by the hearing, but because the government needs the information he possesses" (p. 249).

4. McCarthy, the great intellectual.

It is perhaps unfair to hold the authors responsible for William Schlam's *Prologue* to the book. In it we are told that McCarthy "is one of the few contemporary politicians who earnestly believe in the efficacy of ideas" (p. ix). On the other hand "the most audible intellectuals of our era invoke for themselves a special dispensation from intellectual responsibility, a kind of license to philander through the moral order, a fool's franchise never to be taken at their word" (p. ix).

The book fails to demonstrate what "ideas" McCarthy believes in. Nor do the authors seriously suggest anything they believe in except getting rid of Communists and eliminating the influence of what they call "liberal intellectuals." The impression one gets of Buckley and Bozell is of two completely amoral young men who are "on the make." They occasionally speak of values and sanctions which are necessary for their preservation but these values are not apparent behind their fighting words.

L. F. THORNTON

One of His Enemies

But We Were Born Free, by Elmer Davis; Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., New York; 1954; 229 pp.; \$2.75.

The continuity in Mr. Davis' collection of seemingly random lectures and essays is provided by the fact that the pieces represent "annoyed reactions" of a genuine *mind*—a mind intensely alert to the dangers of a popular culture which is either too lazy, too comfortable, or too much afraid to foster independent, critical, and free thought and debate. In his first, longest, and perhaps most important chapter, Mr. Davis describes the "perilous night" through which we are passing thanks to many others in addition to McCarthy. This "perilous night" is *not* a fascist-type "reign of terror;" it is a fascistoid "climate of fear." In this climate Mr. Davis would remind us that "this nation was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the principle—among others—that honest men may honestly disagree; that if they all say what they think, a majority of the people will be able to distinguish truth from error; that in the competition in the market place of ideas, the sounder ideas will in the long run win out. For almost four years past we have been engaged in a cold civil war—it is nothing less—testing whether any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure." (p. 114). There is much that is quotable here: "With a great price our ancestors obtained . . . freedom, but we were born free" (p. 16). "We shall have no heirs or beneficiaries, and shall deserve none, if we lack the courage to preserve the heritage they won for us" (p. 115). "Freedom can be retained only by the eternal vigilance which has always been its price" (p. 16).

The case for freedom of the mind and the democratic faith on which it is based is well-made by Mr. Davis. The McCarthys, McCarrans, Jenners, Veldes *et al* together with their entourages of favored informers and professional ex-Communists come in for some rough treatment at the hands of their own records, which Mr. Davis presents. The author's dry, satirical wit, his deep appreciation of traditions of due process and

democratic checks and balances, his historical sensitivities, and his intuitive (more than his rational) insights into human nature are his best weapons in freedom's arsenal.

Chapters II through V are elaborations of themes discussed in the first chapter. Chapter IV, entitled "History in Double-think," most obviously flows from the first. In this chapter Mr. Davis expresses his complete exasperation with the professional ex-Communists who believe now, as they believed when they were Communists, that only they are right and are destined to be the saviors of civilization. The demagogues who use such people and the uncritical dullards who believe they are infallible incur no less the judgment mediated through Mr. Davis.

Chapter II, "Improving on the Founding Fathers," is one of the best treatises on the strengths and weaknesses of the American Constitution that we have seen. The delicate problem of efficiency of governmental action versus arbitrary action on the one hand or supine inaction on the other hand is debated in the light of American history and present international realities.

The short Chapter V on the "Grandeurs and Miseries of Old Age" is primarily a reaction against a "grow old along with me; the best is yet to be" sentimentality. This chapter belongs in this book not only because of the dissent which it represents, but because in it Mr. Davis concludes "it is easier to run the risk of being killed (or fired) in action if before long you are going to be dead anyway. This freedom seems to me the chief consolation of old age" (p. 203).

Special attention needs to be called to Chapter III, "News and the Whole Truth." Those who are concerned about questions of *responsibility* on the part of the press will find much to give them thought in these pages. As a newsman capable of both digging out facts and interpreting them, Mr. Davis is nearly unsurpassable. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should be able to reveal to us the ambiguities involved in responsible reporting. The problem of the

reporter is: Does he attempt to present only the facts, or must he present the facts in the context of the whole truth? The former is usually defended on the basis of "objectivity." But while it is a fact that McCarthy *said* there were 205 (or 57, or 81) Communists in the State Department, doesn't the reporter have a responsibility to report more than what McCarthy said—to report at the same time that what McCarthy said was *not* the truth, or at least its veracity was open to serious doubt? If the reporter feels the public should have the whole truth—not only the *fact* of what "Senator Hoozis" said, but whether or not it is *true* and what other facts are relevant—how can he (1) keep up with the monstrous job of discovering the whole relevant truth, and (2) report this context without "editorializing on the first page"?

High praise for Mr. Davis' whole book must be qualified with some comments about the final chapter, "Are We Worth Saving? And If So, Why?", which this reviewer finds partially unsatisfactory. In the first place the discussion here suffers from too many interruptions by Mr. Davis' "annoyed reactions" to Toynbee's and others' interpretations of history. (We are not now questioning the validity of these reactions, but rather the relevance of the digressions which they occasion.) Further, Mr. Davis' argument suffers from lack of precision and development in much the same way that conclusions to many sermons (Mr. Davis invited the comparison) "leap" from diagnosis to exhortation. In rejecting the doctrines of Toynbee, Spengler, *et al*, Mr. Davis seems to be saying that our historical predicament is the consequence of more historical complexities than these men have allowed. And yet Mr. Davis narrows his own thesis to the extent of saying, "I do not think Stalin could have licked us; I do not think whoever now may be running Russia could lick us. But McCarthy and the spirit of McCarthyism could lick us . . ." (p. 228). In fairness to him it must be pointed out that Mr. Davis agrees that for a civilization to save itself it must win its wars as well as govern itself well. But all seems to depend

upon the latter. For the scientific method (of trial and error) in self-government together with the freedom of the mind which makes this possible is regarded: (1) as the *summum bonum* of the West making us worth saving, (2) as the motivation for the courage to fight for our salvation, and (3) as the only means for achieving both the external and internal conditions necessary for the salvation of our civilization. Such an analysis does identify a McCarthy as well as a Stalin or a Malenkov, as an enemy of civilization, but it hardly adequately understands them or accounts for their existence: e.g. "Unfortunately, it cannot be denied that after centuries of education we will have plenty of primitives—some of them white-collar or even top-hat primitives; a

sediment, a sludge, at the bottom of American society—and I am afraid a fairly deep layer at that; people who seem actuated only by hatred and fear and envy. All the products of ignorance, . . ." (p. 226)! To word our criticism more theologically, it is twofold: (1) Mr. Davis seems to regard men primarily as creators of history and almost not at all as creatures of history (whether of its constructive or demonic processes); and (2) Mr. Davis seems radically to divide men into two camps—the primitives and the rationals—and the primitives are explainable only in terms of their primitiveness and the rationals in terms of their rationalism.

But rarely is the best prophet also the best discursive theologian!

ROBERT A. GESSERT

(continued from page 9)

tial validity of the theme of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, "Christ, the Hope of the World." Christ is our common hope precisely because he is the hope of the *world* and not the hope of a nation or a race or any combination of peoples having the same culture. Christ, as the revelation of the mercy of God, is everybody's hope. Our clue to this certainty lies in the experience that just as there is no permanent victory so also there is no decisive defeat that is final.

As a matter of historic fact, because this is a tragic world, victory is not necessarily inevitable even if one does have justice on one's side. This is why no victory is final or permanent. He who was a just man, being the most God-conscious of men—even he did not escape the suffering, the defeat, and the death of the cross. Who then are any of us mortals to think we can have perennial and permanent victory both in our personal lives and our national life? We are not God Almighty who can order victory. We are creatures bound up with the rest of mankind in a common destiny of disappointment, despair, and death. For this being a sinful world is also a tragic world.

It is in such a world that Christ is our

hope quite simply because the mercy of God revealed in Christ covers all mankind and so is everyone's guarantee that no victory in this life is permanent or final. In this kind of world the defeated can also hope. Every conflict involves gradations of justice and injustice the very nature of which calls for yet another victory—this is both our conviction of guilt and our assurance of eventual victory.

To be sure, we must ever be involved in the strife and struggle for little victories, the temporary triumphs that cost us suffering and sacrifice. But Christ is the hope of the world in that he saves us from the illusion that any one of these victories is final. The Kingdom of God which is never fully realized within history—though we cannot escape striving for its approximation because of its indeterminate possibilities—is *the* victory at the end of history. This is the genuine Christian hope—for Christian faith holds that we have no right to seek a full and final victory on this side of tension, anxiety, and death, but only on the other side. Then it is not our doing, but the gift of God. "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (I John 5:4).

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